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ABSTRACT

Programs and experiences in University training of manpower personnel for work with lower class minority groups are evaluated. The conclusions focus on problems that lead to limited implementation of new ideas and skills by trainees when they return to their jobs. Primary among these are: (1) limitations due to characteristics of trainees; (2) limitations due to the organizational structure and values of Employment Service (ES) as a System; and (3) limitations due to the attitudes and skills of the University staff and the format of training. The training, it was found, fails to come to grips with the following: (1) application of the skills covered in training to the ES context; (2) specific implementation problems raised by intra-staff conflicts; and (3) deeply ingrained middle class attitudes as barriers to understanding. Based on these findings, the University of Chicago conducted a training program for Chicago Area Employment Service Counselors which diverged significantly from previous programs in all deficient areas. The program is thoroughly outlined and follow-up evaluation discussed. (TL)

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The Evolution of an Experimental Format for Training Manpower Personnel

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The University of Chicago staff has participated in several evaluations of the effectiveness of University training of manpower personnel, for work with lower class minority groups. These evaluations covered programs of University training for line, supervisory,and management personnel in the local offices, and area and state level administrative personnel. We conducted an extensive followup study in Region IV (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana) in 1966-67 involving group and individual interviews of all levels of the Employment Service in each state. In 1967-68 we acted as consultants to the nationwide study of CAUSE[1] trained counselors conducted by Charles Dailey, then of American University (1). And finally, in 1969 we participated in a day of discussions with other Universities in this region where our training programs and experiences with the ES were compared(2). These events, together with ten years' experience conducting training for ES, and consulting with ES staff at various levels, provide the background for the following summary of conclusions. The focus of our conclusions is on the problems that lead to limited implementation of new ideas and skills by the trainees when they return to their jobs. We will also indicate the implications for designing training programs which can facilitate the implementation of new learning.

I. Limitations due to the characteristics of the trainees:

It was our observation in the follow-up study we conducted that most ES staff, including most counselors, were extremely limited in their communication skills, perspective, and imaginativeness in dealing with people from very different ethnic and economic backgrounds from their own. As a result, frustration built up quickly and we found a good deal of fear, resistance and misunderstanding expressed. Based on our experience with both black and white middle class ES staff it is our tentative conclusion that the problems are primarily due to class and status differences, although racial prejudice is an additional factor in some of the staff. If we expect to achieve changes in their attitudes toward lower class minority groups thru training, we must attempt to make a significant emotional impact on them regarding the implications of poverty in an individual's life as well as to provide general information on its causes. We must also be prepared to deal with the anxiety that this creates in the middle-class trainee, and to help him to deal with it.

The ES staff we interviewed had attended either two or three-week intensive workshops, or eight-week residential CAUSE programs. Most people, at all job levels found the content offered in the intensive workshops generally enlightening and meaningful but found it difficult

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[1] Counselor Aide University Summer Education programs, funded by U.S. Dept. of Labor in 1964 and 1965.

to assimilate very much of it because they became saturated before the program was completed. Managers, supervisors, counselors, and interviewers found it difficult to transfer new ideas and techniques from the training program to the actual day-to-day dealings with their applicants. We concluded that any attempt to sensitize them to the poor must be explicitly related to their specific job tasks, and the implications of abstract statements made in training must be spelled out by the trainer in operational terms pertinent to the trainees' particular work. To achieve this in a meaningful way, the trainees themselves should be involved in a process of defining where they experience discrepancies between what they know and what they do.

II . Limitations due to the organizational structure and the values of ES as a System:

There is a discrepancy between the attitudes and commitments of line personnel (such as counselors, interviewers and aides) and the attitudes and commitments of supervisory, management and lower level administrative personnel. This has a variety of causes, one of which is the fact that for a number of years, orientation training to poverty problems has been focused on the line personnel primarily, creating an untenable problem in leadership for supervisors and managers by asking them to lead people who have new ideas which they themselves have not assimilated. Therefore there is a pressing need for help to managers, supervisors and lower level administrators. In addition, any programs aimed at line personnel must in some way deal with the conflicts this will create on the job. The discrepancy is further deepened by the fact that line personnel are more oriented to, and commited to the concept of service to the applicant, and to any organizational changes that improve this, while supervisors, managers and administrators are more oriented to employers, the power structure of the community, the maintenance of the structure and procedures already established in the Employment Service and the political pressures that impinge on ES as a public agency. This creates some complex communication problems within the larger Employment Service structure which underlie those existing within the local office itself. As a result, it is very difficult to bring about necessary procedural changes in a way that seem appropriate to everyone involved.

To some extent these problems are reflected at all job levels in their relationship to those levels above them in the structure. The conflict, however, seems to be at its peak between counselors and their supervisors because counselors are among the newest personnel in the system and are often given University training early in their ES career. Both the goals and significance of ES counseling have been in a process of continual evolution in recent years, and new trainees have been more clearly oriented to the latest redefinitions thru their University training than were their supervisors thru in-service training or orientation. Thru the participation of

state, regional, and Washington ES staff in planning training programs, the University staff is kept abreast of these redefinitions and tends to incorporate them into its training. American University's nationwide study (1) comparing the effectiveness, on the job, of CAUSE trained and non-CAUSE trained counselors, showed the existence of a significant conflict in values relevant to the counseling function between CAUSE trained counselors and their supervisors. To further complicate matters there was strong evidence in their findings that ES supervisors do not actually supervise counseling functions per se,but rather act primarily as administrators and record keepers. (More details of the pertinent findings appear in the appendix) It appears, then, that the supervisor may not be facilitating the implementation of new skills and at times may actually resist this. We concluded, therefore, that training of any particular level of personnel should include some orientation of their immediate superiors by the trainers and, whenever possible, consultation with them regarding the implementation of the training. This brings us to:

III. Limitations due to the attitudes and skills of the University staff, and the format of training:

We found that in some cases University training had not succeeded in presenting principles of counseling, supervision, management or community relations that were applicable to the ES context. It seems to us that they had made assumptions about what was relevant or useful based on limited knowledge of that context. We concluded that it would be valuable to get University staff better acquainted with the unique setting of the Employment Service. In addition most trainers of counseling in Universities are functioning with middle class populations as students and as clients. Therefore some special efforts need to be made to become better acquainted with the problems of helping members of lower class minority groups.

Institutions differed in the degree to which they attempted to develop special content for ES programs, or used programs already in their curriculum. Having tried both methods ourselves, and on the basis of our talks with other trainers, we have concluded that training that is planned to meet the real needs of the specific trainees and their particular agency and community is far superior to generalized training that is drawn from the curriculum and skills already available in the training institution. This, to some extent, means making greater use of persons in the community who have special areas of expertise pertinent to our goals.

With regard to format of training, the evidence we have seems to indicate that intensive training programs are significantly less effective in fostering implementation on the job than programs that are spaced out over time, the latter of which allow for experimentation, reflection, assimilation and confrontation with instructors and peers based on trial and error experiences. In particular, most effective of all appears to be the program that includes practicum ex-

perience conducted by the University staff in the ES office, thus facilitating the instructor's understanding of the particular context and increasing his help to the trainee in the translation of abstract concepts to on-the-job functions.

In general we concluded that training that had been offered here and at other Universities, though useful as general orientation, had not come to grips with the following:

1. the application of the skills covered in training, to the ES context

2. the specific problems of implementation raised by the conflicts within the staff as it was currently organized, and

3. the significance of deeply ingrained middle class attitudes as barriers to understanding.

Guided by the kinds of observations and concerns outlined above, the University of Chicago conducted a training program for Chicago Area Employment Service Counselors (3) during the period from November 1967 to May 1968. The program differed in significant ways from others we had done previously. It was guided by the principle that it was possible to create a program uniquely focused on the needs of a particular set of trainees and their specific agency, while operating in a reasonable way within the structure of a University setting. In order to accomplish this we had to develop, and maintain throughout the program, a dialogue between the ES administrative staff, the trainees, and ourselves. We devised a format that consisted of four phases, the first of which was the ES's normal in-service training for counselors and their orientation to HRD[2] for all staff. After Phase I, each phase was planned only after the previous one was completed, so that we were able to remain flexible and responsive to the actual development and needs of the class. Chicago managers and administrators, and state level supervisors participated in an evaluation of the needs and deficiencies of the trainees which they passed on to us for use in planning the training. We departed completely from the view that we could present standard courses or invite speakers to give lectures which they had prepared for other contexts. Rather, we oriented every speaker to the interests and responsibilities of these trainees and asked them to prepare their lecture content in a pertinent way.

This program took place during a period of extreme anxiety in our society and of genuine concern regarding our own community in Chicago. In fact, Dr. King's murder and serious riots in Chicago occured during the time of this program. Everyone felt this pressure, but the choice of speakers and instructors was made with a particular criterion in mind: that they were persons who were trying to respond creatively to the challenge by finding better solutions. The large number of people who acted as instructors helped to create an atmosphere of great stimulation and excitement for the trainees and staff. The wide range of experiences and activities to which trainees

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[2] The Human Resources Development concept of the Employment Service introduced in 1967.

were exposed created a total immersion experience, as far as that was possible in a University program context.

The University's part of the program consisted of three phases, two of which were conducted as short intensive residential workshops (Phase II in November, 1967; Phase IV in April and May 1968), consisting of lectures, films, discussions and participation in a small group that met daily. These two phases introduced the trainees to the culture, family, general experience and history of Blacks in urban society; to the concepts in sociology and psychology useful to their work; to the legal and penal institutions as experienced by the poor; and gave them an introductory course in Employment Counseling. Their small groups met daily and gave them an opportunity to discuss and assimilate lecture material, and started their work on counseling methods. It was in these phases that the trainees were initially stimulated and challenged to reflect on their own competence and attitudes, and in which finally they were helped to integrate their experience with the total program. The success of these phases was facilitated by the fact that the lecturers gave unusually pertinent distillations of their own experience and knowledge, and the small group leaders demonstrated great flexibility in acting as discussion leaders, consultants, instructors and guides. The total impact was to help each trainee to formulate an appropriate image of the goals and methods for counseling with the disadvantaged.

During Phase III (December, 1967 - April 1968) the trainees returned to their jobs and met every week with their small group and the University instructor who led it. These groups went on a series of field trips aimed at acquainting them with a wide range of community resources, and, on alternate weeks, met in a local office to discuss counseling cases and intrastaff issues. The purpose of this long phase was to give the trainees an opportunity to develop their counseling skills by trying them out on the job, and then reflecting on them under the conditions created in a small work group of peers led by an experienced counselor-instructor.

It was the work of this Phase that enabled the trainees to translate new insights and ideas into operationally useful methods and behavior. We feel that the degree to which this occurred went beyond our expectations, considering the small amount of actual supervised time that each trainee received.

The training experience seemed to challenge the trainees in many ways. A great many of them gave evidence of developing increased sensitivity and increased understanding of the lower class urban Black and his experience. The field experiences were received as a much needed exposure to the community and its resources. The work on writing up cases, though not elaborate, produced visible results. The trainees were challenged by the focus in the counseling training on improving communication across class and culture barriers and most of them responded to this by working very hard at it. The opportunity to participate in a well functioning consultation group gave them a model of what the supervisory relationship can be like. In general the class was extremely serious and intense from the start, and re-

sponded with great vitality to every aspect of training. According to the trainees the most generally agreed upon gain from this experience was an increased self awareness and increased sensitivity to others. They also felt that the exposure to the Black culture and experience deepened their understanding in a way that had great emotional as well as intellectual impact.

Although we were pleased with the overall results we felt that we did not reach all of the trainees with the same degree of success. A group of this size (39) in intensive counseling training is somewhat unwieldy. To do a more even job we needed a larger staff, more individual work with each trainee, and smaller sections for the counseling-lecture sequence.

Although there was considerable structure in this program, the trainees were encouraged from the start, to express their views and to participate in the planning. The length of the program allowed the trainees to develop trust in their instructors and gave them an opportunity to experiment with expressing their views in a context where their ideas were taken seriously and, so far as was possible, were implemented immediately.

In attempting to create a meaningful training experience by staying close to their needs we found, of course, that they had needs we did not anticipate. We made every effort however, to respond to these in a way that would allow the trainees to develop maturity by taking responsibility for the things that concerned them, and to guide that experience to a positive outcome whenever possible.

We feel that the opportunity that was created for the trainees to express their own concerns and to develop them as part of the program was one of the significant factors in releasing their great energy and enthusiasm for participation in the formal and University - initiated aspects of the program.

In a surprising burst of energy and involvement, the trainees gave up their free time on the third day after coming to campus, and produced a long list of issues relating to their job situation about which they wanted to see changes made. These issues involved all levels of functioning in the ES. At the time, we felt that that might have been, at least in part, a defensive response to the pressure to change themselves. However, we knew that the issues they raised had substantive value as well. Our response to this was to facilitate the creation of opportunities for serious communication between them and various levels of the ES management and administrative staffs. A one day workshop (April 16) was planned with Chicago Area and Illinois State administrators to discuss the issues which that level of personnel could influence.

The significance of this meeting was that an exchange of ideas generated a feeling of hopefulness in the trainees. It also demonstrated the satisfaction than can be gained from better communication, and the opportunity to see one's superiors as human beings interested in similar problems.

Later, meetings were held in most of the local offices represented in the trainee group to discuss those issues relevant to that setting. Almost everyone involved in any of these meetings found it to be useful and productive communication. However, all of the trainees and most supervisory people felt that this was only a beginning of a kind of communication which was badly needed and which should be continued.

As a result of the workshop, one administrator requested the views of the trainees on the question of how counselors in the ES should be evaluated. A document was prepared by the class describing their view of the supervisor-counselor relationship, as well as the identification of criteria for evaluating counselors. A committee from the class edited this work and submitted it to the Chicago Area office. The significance of the quality of their achievement is attested to by the interest that has been shown in it by several State and Regional Supervisors of Counseling and a number of persons in the Washington offices of the ES.

Questionnaires were distributed to the small group leaders, the trainees, their managers and counseling supervisors and to administrators who participated in the one-day workshop. In addition, a follow-up interview was conducted with all the trainees during September, 1968. During these interviews we saw evidence of increased confidence in the trainees with respect to their work as counselors, their relationship to the community, and their willingness to assert themselves in communication with their own staff and with us. We felt that the attitudes they expressed were more open, understanding, mature and hopeful than before.

The responses of all three groups showed a great deal of agreement on the outcome of the program as being quite useful, and having achieved a considerable amount of observable change in most trainees. Their suggestions for future programs indicate that this one was indeed organized in a meaningful and functional way, because most of their ideas were refinements and extensions of our basic design. Perhaps most dramatic to us was the fact that this was the first time in our experience with ES, that we did not hear the comment from anyone, that this training was not relevant to the ES context.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that, most of the training programs evaluated here were conducted during a period of basic reorientation of the Employment Service's goals, methods and foci. The programs were defined by them as orientation to work with the poor, and skill training in counseling, supervision and management. However, the practical fact was that the programs were one of the primary vehicles by which ES jobs were being redefined on a functional level. The conclusions arrived at in this paper reflect the general idea that it is

difficult to redefine one job in a system of inter-related job-functions without affecting those jobs that must be coordinated with it. In addition, it is difficult to successfully establish a basically new function without doing some retraining or orientation of personnel in related jobs. Therefore the design for a training format that emerged from our conclusions must be seen to be most pertinent to these problems. The design of a particular program that will meet the needs of any particular ES system however, will depend on a variety of factors, such as where that system is in its organizational development; what the nature of current management - staff relationships is; the level of training of the staff; the community in which it is functioning, etc. While we feel that the format we have described here is a good starting point for our future programs, we know that modifications of it will have to be made in response to the particular conditions and trainees involved at the time.

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2. Notes on Employment Service - Universities Meeting on Out-Service Training. Mimeographed summary of discussion: June, 1968.

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Appendix

Some of the specific findings of a nationwide study comparing CAUSE trained and non-CAUSE trained counselors:

1. In comparing counselors ratings of themselves and supervisors ratings of the counselors they found no correlation except on those scales that had to do with filling out forms. The researchers interpretation was that this was probably the only counselor behavior that supervisors and counselors jointly observe. The very low correlation also indicates a distinct lack of communication between counselors and their supervisors.

2. Via a comparison of vari us research methods the authors came to the conclusion that the counselors do not apply the value systems of good counseling to themselves in any systematic way. This may indicate lack of perspective on their parts but it more clearly indicates lack of adequate supervision, one purpose of which is to help the individual to evaluate, understand and improve his own performance.

3. It is important to note that counselors and supervisors do agree highly in their descriptions of what the counselor does on his job - but do not agree on the rating of it. The authors feel that this can create a serious organizational problem.

4. Supervisors rated non-CAUSE counselors high on the scales called:

    1. Makes an understandable human record

    2. Fills out required forms

    3. Communicates information well.

rated CAUSE trained counselors high on:

    1. Promotes realistic decisions by the client

    2. Rapport

    3. Ability to create a counseling relationship

    4. Group cohesiveness.

5. In stating their preferences for co-workers the supervisors chose Non-CAUSE staff more heavily and ranked them higher overall as counselors.